

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMSCUS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1974

LIMDIS

DEPT PASS AMBASSADOR KEATING

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR IS EG XF

SUBJ: ISRAELI REACTION TO SADAT MARCH 29 SPEECH

BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL XGDS-1

SUMMARY AND COMMENT: ISRAELI REACTION TO SADAT SPEECH HAS BEEN MIXTURE OF SUPRISE, SCEPTICISM, CAUTION AND CHAGRIN THAT EGYPTIANS STOLE A DIPLOMATIC MARCH ON THEM. POSITIVE ELEMENTS WERE UNDOUBTEDLY WELCOMED BY MANY ISRAELIS, BUT THEY WERE UNFORTUNATELY OFFSET IN PART BY ISRAELI BEHIEF THAT SPEECH WAS AN ELEMENT OF A "CLEVER" PSYWAR CAMPAIGN BY SADAT TO PAINT ROSY PICTURE OF EGYPTIAN FLEXIBILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSUMPTION. IT IS ALSO WIDELY BELIEVED IN ISRAEL THAT OPENING OF CANAL WILL REALLY ONLY BENEFIT EGYPT. END SUMMARY.

1. FONMIN ALLON TOLD US AFTER SPEECH THAT GOI....WOULD DELIBERATELY DOWNPLAY OFFICIAL REACTION TO SADAT'S SPEECH.
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ALLON CLAIMED THAT THIS WAS THEIR WAY OF MAKING A CONTRIBUTION

TO " ATMOSPHERE." AS CONCERNS THE RE-OPENING OF CANAL, HE MADE CLEAR THAT IN HIS VIEW THIS WAS IN EGYPT'S INTEREST, POINTING OUT THAT ACCORDING TO " HIS ECONOMISTS," THE CANAL IS WORTH A TOTAL OF ABOUT A BILLION DOLLARS IN FEES TO EGYPT EACH YEAR. AT ANOTHER POINT IN DEFENSE OF ISRAELI POSITIONS TAKEN DURING THE TALKS, HE NOTED THAT ABU RHODEIS WOULD BE WORTH ANOTHER ONE-HALF BILLION DOLLARS PER YEAR TO EGYPT. IN HIS VIEW, ISRAEL WAS WILLING TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR EGYPT TO OBTAIN ONE-HALF BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR IN ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, SOMETHING SADAT NEEDS DESPERATELY TO DEVELOP HIS COUNTRY. (ALL OF THIS WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF WHY THERE MIGHT BE SOME HOPE BEFORE GENEVA FOR A SUCCESSFUL U.S. INITIATIVE WITH EGYPT AND ISRAEL FOR AN INTERIM AGREEMENT.) END CONFIDENTIAL XGDS-1

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

2. IN ISRAELI PARESS, HAARETZ EDITORIAL CALLED REOPENING OF CANAL " AN IMPORTANT STEP" TOWARD REDUCTION OF WAR DANGER, AND SAID " ISRAEL WILL DO WELL TO MAKE A GESTURE IN RETURN... IN A WAY THAT SHOWS ITS OWN READINESS TO CONTRIBUTE TO A REDUCTION OF THE TENSION". DAVAR EDITORIAL EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT SADAT'S OFFER TO REOPEN CANAL WITHOUT DEMANDING ANY ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IN RETURN, IF IMPLEMENTED IT WOULD INDICATE THAT SADAT HAD CHOSEN PATH OF DIPLOMACY. AT SAME TIME, DAVAR SAID SUCH GESTURES ARE " NO MORE THAN HINTS OF HIS POSSIBLE INTENTIONS" AND FEELS IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE TO DRAW FIRM CONCLUSIONS. MAARIV FINDS AN ELEMENT OF RESTRAINT IN SADAT'S SPEECH, IN WHICH " HE MADE IT CLEAR HE IS NOT MOVING BLINDLY TOWARDS A NEW WAR. ABOVE ALL, MAARIV CONTINUED, " SADAT HAS LEFT AN OPENING FOR THE RESUMPTION OF DR. KISSINGER'S INITIATIVE".

3. SOME WRITERS IMPLY THAT OFFERS MADE BY SADAT MAY NOT BE AS SIGNIFICANT IN FACT AS THEY MIGHT APPEAR. JERUSALEM POST (UNATTRIBUTED) POINTED OUT THAT " THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL....WAS IN FACT PROMISED DURING TALKS ON THE FIRST DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT". MOREOVER, " THE THREE-MONTH EXTENSION OF THE UNEF MANDATE...IS IN FACT AN ARBITRARY INFRINGEMENT OF THE 'TIME CLAUSE' IN THE 'FIRST' AGREEMENT, CONFIDENTIAL

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WHICH IS BASED ON SIX-MONTH EXTENSIONS." RE EGYPTIAN OFFER TO RETURN 39 ISRAELI SOLDIERS KILLED IN 1973, SEVERAL PAPERS REPORTED STATEMENT BY PM RABIN TO CABINET MARCH 30 THAT THIS WAS RESULT OF CONTINUOUS EFFORT BY GOI. DAVAR (BLOCH) ADDED THAT UNDER DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, EGYPT WAS UNDER OBLIGATION TO ALLOW TEAMS FROM IDF CHAPLAINS CORPS TO SEARCH FOR BODIES BUT HAD NOT ALLOWED SEARCHES TO BE CARRIED OUT.

4. PRESS ALSO RELATED SADAT SPEECH TO CURRENT BICKERING BETWEEN EGYPT ON ONE HAND AND SYRIA AND PLO ON OTHER. DAVAR SAID THAT SYRIAN MEDIA'S DISREGARD OF SPEECH AND CONTINUING ATTACKS BY SYRIA AND PLO ON KISSINGER REFLECT SYRIAN AND PLO SUSPICION THAT KISSINGER'S FAILURE IS ONLY TEMPORARY. JERUSALEM POST POINTED OUT THAT IN HIS SPEECH SADAT "IMPLIED THAT SYRIA AND PLO WERE PARTIALLY TO BLAME FOR THE BREAKDOWN OF THE KISSINGER TALKS". IN SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VEIN, MAARIV (SEGEV) WROTE THAT " FOLLOWING THE SEVERE CRITICISM OF SADAT BY ARAB EXTREMISTS, A CHANGE OF HIS POLICY AT THIS MOMENT WOULD BE REGARDED AS A KIND OF ADMISSION OF HIS PERSONAL FAILURE".END UNCLASSIFIED. VELIOTES

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